



Human Rights Commission

*Te Kāhui Tika Tangata*

## **Trans People Fact Sheet FAQ: Supporting trans students**

### **Terminology**

This resource provides schools with information to support whakawāhine, tangata ira tane, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, akava'ine, trans, gender queer and other gender diverse and gender questioning students. The umbrella terms 'trans' has been used throughout this resource to describe this very wide range of people. It may not be the term individual students use to describe their gender identity.

### **What name and pronoun should be put on a trans student's school documentation?**

Ask a trans student what is their preferred name and pronoun. Then consistently use those terms, regardless of the details on the student's birth certificate. All school rolls should use a student's preferred name.

Some, but not all, trans students will have changed the name details on their birth certificate. It is very unlikely trans students will have been able to change the sex details on their birth certificate while still at school. In limited situations where the details on a student's birth certificate need to be sighted or recorded, this information should be kept as confidential as possible.

### **Who needs to know that a trans student is enrolled at the school?**

The school principal, school counsellor and a trans student's teachers should be aware of the student's gender identity. This enables staff to address any specific gender identity issues that may arise at school. In some schools it may be appropriate for more staff to know that a student is trans. However, any such decisions should recognise the student's right to privacy.

It is not appropriate for a school to disclose a trans student's gender identity to other students and their families, except with the trans student's permission.

### **Should trans students tell other students they are trans?**

It is for trans students to decide if, and when, they want to share this information. Some, particularly those who are not easily identifiable as trans, may simply want to blend in. For example, a female-to-male (FtM) trans boy will often want to be treated the same as other male students.

### **What will be the impact of a trans student on other classmates?**

Having an openly trans student may encourage others in the class to talk about gender diversity. Positive discussions may make it safer for other students to question their gender or identify as trans. Such discussions also strengthen the wider school culture by demonstrating that diversity is celebrated and human rights are respected.

### **What about sex-segregated activities at school?**

If males and females are separated for school classes or activities, trans students should be allowed to participate in the group that matches their gender identity. Also consider holding a mixed session open to any students. This is likely to be the easiest option for those trans students who do not identify and/or pass as solely male or female.

### **What toilets should trans students use?**

Trans students should have the choice of using a toilet that matches their gender identity. This can be an important way to support a trans student's sense of identity and wellbeing. For example, fa'afafine, whakawāhine or male-to-female (MtF) trans girls identifying as female should be able to use the female toilets, if that is their preference.

A unisex or disability toilet can be a good alternative for a trans student. Other options include using toilets in a sick bay/health centre or the staff toilets.

Some other students may initially be uncomfortable sharing toilets with a trans person. It can help to explain that privacy and safety are important for all students when using bathroom facilities, and that any form of harassment will not be tolerated. If these students are still uncomfortable about using the same toilet blocks as trans students, they could also be offered the use of a unisex or disability toilet.

### **What changing area should trans students use?**

Trans students should have the choice of using the changing area that matches their gender identity.

Many trans students will feel vulnerable having to change clothes in front of other students. Creating a private area in the changing rooms can be very useful for trans

students. This might involve adding a curtain or a cubicle door. Other options include allowing trans students to use a unisex, disability or staff toilet as a changing area.

### **What uniform or dress code applies to trans students?**

If your school has a uniform, trans students should be allowed to wear the uniform that matches their gender identity. Ideally schools will also have a gender-neutral uniform option as this may be the most appropriate uniform and preferred option for some trans students.

### **What about sports uniforms or swimming costumes?**

Many trans students will use clothes, bindings and other aids to make their body more closely match their gender identity. These aids are hard to conceal if a trans student is required to wear a close fitting sports uniform or swimming costume. Loose fitting unisex options can be a better alternative. For swimming, this includes rash suits, rash shirts and longer swimming shorts.

Body discomfort is common for trans students and should be acknowledged. Some trans students may be very distressed about swimming because a wet swimming costume is too revealing. In these instances, the possibility of being excused from swimming should be discussed with the student and the student's parents/guardian.

### **If trans students want to play sport which team should they play for?**

Where possible, a trans girl should be able to play in a girls' team and a trans boy in a boys' team, wearing the appropriate uniform. This applies for any sport before a child turns 12; non-competitive events; and those sports where strength, stamina or physique do not give someone a competitive advantage.

### **Can trans girls still play competitively in girls' teams after puberty?**

Once a trans girl reaches puberty her body's natural hormones will give her an unfair competitive advantage over other girls. This advantage would disappear if she is on hormone blockers or female hormones, enabling her to play as a female. If a trans girl is not on female hormones or hormone blockers, one option would be playing mixed competitive sport as a female, but being counted as one of the 'male' team members.

Increasingly some sports bodies are aware of the needs of trans students and are finding ways to encourage their participation. In some cases this has included allowing trans girls to play competitive sport as females, whether or not they are on female hormones or hormone blockers. At higher level competitive sports events, sport bodies may be bound by regulations set by their sporting code.

### **Can a trans boy play in competitive boys' teams?**

A trans boy is able to play competitively against other boys (though he may have a competitive disadvantage, especially if he is not on male hormones). If a trans boy has been on full dose male hormones for over a year it is likely he would have a competitive advantage against girls.

### **Who should trans students share a room with on school camp?**

If they wish, trans girls should be able to share a room with other girls, and trans boys share with other male students. It can be helpful if the trans student is able to share a room with friend/s, particularly with the consent of each child's parent/s. If there are concerns about safety for any of the students, consider having a staff member in the room. If you have smaller or private rooms available for students with specific needs, consider also making these available for trans students.

### **How do we deal with bullying of trans students?**

A school has the responsibility to create a safe physical and emotional environment for all its students. This includes ensuring trans students are able to express their gender identity at school without facing discrimination or harassment.

Bullies will tend to pick on anybody who is different if they think they can get away with it. Trans students can be targets for bullies. There is no reason to think that the school's usual ways of dealing with bullying will be less effective for trans people. Including material about gender diversity within the curriculum will help foster a supportive environment for trans youth and benefit other students too.

### **How can schools support parents of trans students?**

Often a parent may be fearful about how their child will be treated at school. Reassure them that the school respects diversity and every student's right to a safe school environment. There is specific information designed for parents listed in RESOURCES: Trans children, youth and their families.