

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Factsheet

U.S. Student Association Foundation 2008



Transgender Student Access

Definitions

Gender Identity: A person's own sense of their identity as a man, woman, or a combination of both or neither

Gender Expression: The external presentation or appearance of a person's gender

Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe people who do not fit into traditional gender roles, many people who consider themselves to be transgender have a gender identity and/or expression that is not congruent with their biological sex

Transsexual: A person who pursues gender reassignment through use of hormones, surgery, and/or a change in identity, to live a gender other than the one assigned at birth

Female to Male: Used to identify a person who was assigned female at birth and who identifies as male or masculine and lives as a man

Male to Female: Used to identify a person who was assigned male at birth and who identifies as female or feminine and lives as a woman

Transition: The period during which transgender individuals begin to live a new life in their gender, this may include taking hormones and having surgery.

Transphobia: A fear or discomfort with transgender, transsexual, or gender variant people

Restrooms

Problems:

Gender specific (men only/women only) restrooms can present a lose/lose situation for transgender people. Each time a transgender person needs to use a restroom a choice has to be made about which facility to enter. Regardless of the decision, a transgender person faces issues. For example, in some states a female to male transgender person is still legally considered female, and can be arrested for using the men's room. However if that person attempts to use the women's restroom he potentially faces harassment by other occupants and police.

Solutions:

Your university could:

- Include a single occupancy, gender neutral, restroom in the same location as multiple occupancy restrooms.
- Make all single occupancy restrooms gender neutral and provide a map locating all of them.
- Designate certain multi-stall restrooms as gender neutral.
- Allow people to use the restroom that is appropriate for their gender identity and/or the restroom they feel safe in.

Identification Cards

Problems:

Most universities require students to have ID cards in order to access their dormitories, libraries, and computer centers. This poses a problem for the transgender student whose legal name is not their commonly used name and whose gender expression is not congruent with their legal name and picture on their ID. Not only does this "out" them, but this can lead to harassment from university staff and the inability to access spaces on campus that are necessary for collegiate success.

Solutions:

Your university could:

- Allow students to have just their legal first and middle initials and full legal last name on ID cards.
- Waive fees for getting a new picture.
- Simplify the process of changing the name on university documents, for students who have had legal name changes.

Institutional Support and Resources

Problems:

Very few universities have policies that protect transgender students and make campuses more accessible for transgender people. This leaves transgender students open to abuse from others in the university and does not provide these students with a place to voice issues or concerns. Staff and faculty on college campuses are often not educated about the issues that transgender students face on campus and therefore cannot properly advocate on the behalf of these students, or modify their own behavior, language, and classes to be more inclusive of and sensitive to transgender people.

Solutions:

Your university could:

- Include gender identity and expression as a protected category in all antidiscrimination policies on campus.
- Provide training for campus staff and faculty on transgender issues.
- Establish and publicize a method of reporting transgender related harassment on campus.
- Assure that all resources for LGBT students include information for and about transgender people and issues.

Housing

Problems:

A male to female student enrolls in a university. Where does that university house this student? This is an especially tough issue for schools that do not have coed housing options. If this student is still legally male than she will usually be placed with a male roommate which can lead to issues of safety and comfort. Most campuses do not have policies regarding housing for transgender students. On top of this, Residence Hall Assistants often do not have the information and knowledge needed to handle problems that transgender students may encounter with their roommates.

Solutions:

Your university could:

- Provide roommate facilitation and room transgender students with someone who is educated, understanding, and supportive of transgender issues.
- Place transgender students in single rooms and waive additional fees for these rooms.
- Provide Resident Hall Assistants with sensitivity trainings and educational material around transgender issues
- Place transgender students where they feel the most comfortable and safe.
- Create LGBT-themed floors/halls and coed rooms.

College and University Nondiscrimination Policies the Include Gender Identity/Expression

- **115 individual colleges and Universities have Gender Identity/Expression in their NDP**
- **All schools in California, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Washington, and Washington D.C. also provide transgender protection under their state nondiscrimination policies.**
- **Courts have ruled in favor of transgender protection in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York.**
- **Also several cities and counties have passed transgender antidiscrimination laws.** check www.transgenderlaw.org for an up to date list.

Other Resources available at:

- Gender Public Advocacy Coalition
www.gpac.org
- Gender Education and Advocacy
www.gender.org
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
www.thetaskforce.org
- Human Rights Campaign
www.hrc.org

Mental and Physical Health Care

Problems:

Most mental and physical health care staff on campus do not have the information or training needed to properly treat transgender people. Health centers are not often equipped to work with the specific physical health care needs of transgender people, such as monitoring hormones and health problems associated with hormone use and pre and post surgical needs.

Solutions:

Your university could:

- Provide mental and physical health services with sensitivity training and educational resources on the needs of transgender people.
- Require counseling centers to have at least one staff person equipped to handle the mental care of LGBT students, and health clinics to have at least one staff person equipped to handle the physical care of transgender students.
- Offer health care that covers therapy and hormones.