

Transgender Students in Middle and High School

Helpful Information on Working with Transgender Youth

At Garden State Equality, it is our mission to educate and inform schools, students, parents and the community about issues faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) students and increase awareness of how to support youth at school and in their communities. We want all young people to be safe, receive a quality education and achieve greatness. Here is some information to help you better understand what being “transgender” means as it relates to middle and high school students.

- A transgender woman/girl is a person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies as female (Jazz Jennings is a transgender girl). She uses female pronouns: she/her/hers.
- A transgender man/boy is a person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies as male (Elliot Page is a transgender man). He uses male pronouns: he/him/his.
- Transgender middle and high school students may already have a “social transition” meaning they live their life at school, home, and in their community as the gender they identify as. Some transgender teenagers take hormone blockers to delay the onset of puberty when secondary sex characteristics begin to develop.
- Transgender children, teens, and adults have always existed in our society, but through acceptance and social change, transgender youth and families are able to be more visible.
- Just like most teenagers, transgender teenagers may have a defined sexual orientation and may be exploring their attraction to a specific gender or genders.

How can YOU help?

- Continue to talk to your community about accepting differences.
- Teach anti-bullying concepts at home.
- Always answer questions about gender identity and expression in a positive tone.
- Please share this worksheet with fellow parents, friends and family members to help educate the people in your community



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Defining Terms and Concepts

Gender Identity: A person's deeply felt psychological identification as male or female, or as non-binary. All people have a gender identity, not just transgender people.

Non-Binary: This means a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female.

Transgender: We are all assigned a sex at birth. If your sex assigned at birth does not align with your gender identity, you may identify as transgender.

Cisgender: Cisgender simply means that a person's sex assigned at birth and gender identity easily align. If the doctor announces "It's a girl!" and that person grows up to identify as female, they're cisgender.

Gender Expression: This refers to all of the external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, hygiene, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.

Teens and the Gender Binary: Teens can identify as non-binary. This means they do not fall into the category of male or female as defined by societal norms.

Transgender Youth: Transgender youth are children or adolescents who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Because transgender youth are usually dependent on their parents for care, shelter, financial support, and other needs, they face different challenges compared to adults.

Sexual Orientation vs Gender Identity: Whether transgender, cisgender or nonbinary, gender does not dictate sexual orientation.

Mental Health: Transgender teens are at greater risk for anxiety, depression and suicide compared to their cisgender counterparts. Creating accepting and affirming communities helps reduce these risks.



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