



**CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT**

# Gender Diversity: *Frequently Asked Questions & Resources*

# Overview

This document serves to provide resources in conjunction with the Park District's Gender Diversity Policy.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why is the Park District Implementing a Gender Diversity Policy?

The Park District supports the members of the transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming community and recognizes that the policy plays an important role in creating and sustaining safe and supportive environments for patrons. This policy ensures that our spaces are welcoming to all members of our community and fosters an inclusive environment that is reflective of the diversity of the public and communities we serve.

Many other organizations and cities already have Gender Diversity policies in place, including [Chicago Public Schools](#).

This policy also builds off of our Human Rights Ordinance in the [Chicago Park District Code](#), which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, among other protected classes.

### Why Should We Support Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Nonconforming Youth?

Transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming youth are more likely than their cisgender peers to have negative experiences at school.<sup>1</sup> They suffer stigma, discrimination, harassment, and violence that adversely affect health and educational outcomes. The 2017 National School Climate Survey by GLSEN reported that among transgender students in schools:

- 59.5% felt unsafe at school because of their gender expression
- 42.7% avoid bathrooms at school because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- 40.6% avoid locker rooms at school because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- 34.9% report regularly skipping school because of safety concerns

#### **Harassment, Exclusion, Sense of Belonging**

The 2018 Gender-Expansive Youth Report by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the University of Connecticut reported findings on the experiences of transgender, nonbinary, and gender expansive youth in the U.S. ages 13-17. They found:

- 84% experienced verbal harassment based on gender expression
- 80% of gender expansive youth of color reported experiencing racism
- 42% experienced physical threats based on gender expression
- 52% reported being bullied on school property in the last 12 months

---

<sup>1</sup> "Cisgender" is a term used to describe people whose gender identity corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth.

- Only 16% felt safe in the classroom compared to 32% of their cisgender LGBTQ+ peers

### Overall Well-Being

The 2018 HRC report noted that gender expansive youth are at high risk for negative health outcomes. They found that:

- 97% have trouble sleeping at night
- 88% felt down in the past week and 84% felt hopeless or worthless in the past week
- 85% rated their average stress level as a 5 or higher on a scale of 1-10

## Why Are Some Families Private About Having a Transgender Child?

Everyone has a right to privacy. This includes the right to keep private their transgender status or gender nonconforming presentation while engaged in Park District activities. Transgender and gender nonconforming youth (and adults) also have the right to openly discuss and express their gender identity and expression at the Park District and to decide when, with whom, and how to share private information. It's important to respect the wishes of each individual, and to be wary of sharing confidential information without the individual's consent, or unless authorized by the Office of Protection and Accountability or the Law Department.

## Won't Discussing Gender Diversity Encourage Young People to be Gay or Transgender?

Information and discussion about trans, gay and lesbian people will not make anyone gay or straight. Education about LGBTQ issues can help combat fear and discrimination, enabling all people to feel and be safe.

## What Should I Do if I See or Become Aware of Discrimination or Harassment Related to a Person's Gender Identity?

Each Employee shall ensure that all Patrons and other Employees, including those who are transgender, nonbinary and gender nonconforming, have a safe and welcoming environment. This includes ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment, or violence is handled in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Chicago Park District Code by reaching out to the Park District's **Office of Prevention and Accountability (OPA)** by emailing **OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com** or by calling **312-472-5OPA (312-742-5672)**.

Any Park District supervisor or manager-level Employee who receives a report or reasonably suspects a violation of the Human Rights Ordinance, which includes discrimination or harassment based on gender identity, shall refer the matter in writing to the Office of Prevention and Accountability within five business days.

## When Should I Do if I Hear Someone Say Something Harmful?

Depending on the situation, you can pose some questions to the person to better understand where they are coming from, or to provide them with context for the situation at hand. Some responses could be:

- Where did you first learn that?
- What did you mean by that?
- I'm sure you didn't mean to be hurtful, but when you use that word . . .
- I know you were just trying to be funny, but I found that joke offensive because . . .
- I don't believe that's true. I have learned about this topic and...
- My experience has been different. In my experience...
- I used to use those terms too, then I heard they can be harmful because...

## What Should I Do if I Accidentally Misgender Someone?

Misgendering occurs when a person refers to or relates to a person or uses language to describe a person that doesn't align with their affirmed gender. This includes using gender pronouns that do not align with an individual's affirmed gender identity.

We are all human, and everyone makes mistakes! If you make a mistake, don't get defensive. Instead, acknowledge the mistake, politely apologize, and move on, without apologizing profusely. Some responses and tips include:

- Say "thank you" when corrected
- "I'm sorry for using the wrong pronoun"
- "What are your pronouns again?"
- "I apologize, let me try again"

## How Can Patrons Update Their Gender in ActiveNet?

The Park District has added "non-binary" as a gender option in our registration system, ActiveNet. Here are instructions on how to update a profile in ActiveNet:

- Login: <https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/chicagoparkdistrict/signin>
- From Account Options Page, choose "Manage Family Member"
- On a computer/laptop, look at lower right corner
- On a Smartphone/mobile device, expand [name] family box, second to last option
- Click on the name of the family member to be updated
- Update gender option from drop down menu (Male, Female, Non-Binary)
- Click Save

## How Can Patrons Add Their Pronouns in ActiveNet?

The Park District has added the option for patrons to add their pronouns in their account in our registration system, ActiveNet. Here are instructions on how to update pronouns in ActiveNet:

- Login: <https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/chicagoparkdistrict/signin>
- Click on "Change Answers to Questions"
- Click "View and Modify"
- Click "Account Creation Questions"
- Click "What are this customer's preferred pronouns?" and select a pronoun option from drop down menu
- Click Save

## I have a question about this policy. Who can I reach out to?

If you have questions about this policy, or other feedback, please complete the form at <https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/contact-us>.

## Resources

- Supporting and Caring for Our Gender Expansive Youth, a report from Gender Spectrum and the Human Rights Campaign.  
This report examines the experiences of survey respondents whose gender identities or expressions expand our conventional understanding of gender. It is designed to provide adults with a better understanding of these youth and to help adults find ways to communicate with and support all youth in their lives. The report also provides information and suggestions for those seeking to increase their comfort and competency with the evolving landscape of gender identity and expression.
- The Human Rights Campaign's LGBTQ+ Youth page includes resources for families, community members and more.
- HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools is the nation's premier professional development program providing training and resources to elementary school educators on a range of issues, including how to support transgender and nonbinary students.
- Transgender Youth In America's Schools  
This study from GSLEN highlights the challenges transgender youth face in schools.
- Gender Spectrum [www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)  
This site provides resources on gender and gender identity.
- U.S. Department Of Education's Supporting Transgender Youth In School  
This document provides an overview of how schools and adults can be supportive of transgender youth.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) best practices states that all employees, including transgender employees, should have access to restrooms that correspond to their gender identity.