



*The Source for Knowledge on Gender & Orientation*

## **Miami-Dade County Public Schools Gender Resource Guide**

Questions, answers, and solutions for  
schools with gender transitioning students.



YES Institute is accredited for continuing education by:

**Miami-Dade County Public Schools  
Professional Development** (TEC #2-403-001)

**FL Department of Health - Boards of Nursing,  
Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy  
& Mental Health Counseling** (BAP #50-1652)

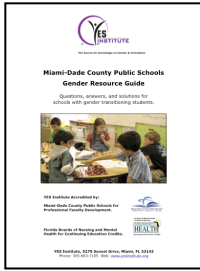


**YES Institute, 5275 Sunset Drive, Miami, FL 33143**  
Phone: 305-663-7195 Web: [www.yesinstitute.org](http://www.yesinstitute.org)

## Table of Contents

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Purpose of the Guide</b> .....	3
<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
Gender Awareness Changing .....	4
A Matter of Life and Death .....	4
What Is a Gender Transition? .....	5
What Do I Need to Know? .....	5
<b>Gender: Then &amp; Now</b> .....	5
A New Framework for Understanding .....	7
<b>Gender Transitioning</b> .....	8
Confidentiality Should Always Be Respected .....	9
<b>Implications for Schools</b> .....	9
Restrooms, Locker Rooms, and Swimming Pools .....	9
Addressing Inappropriate Comments Toward Students .....	10
Pronoun Usage .....	10
Appropriate Attire .....	11
Policy Extensions and Disciplinary Actions .....	11
Gender-segregated Classes, Sports, & Activities .....	11
Changing Student Records .....	12
Censoring Relationships or Alliances .....	12
<b>What Constitutes Harassment?</b> .....	13
What to Do About Perceived Harassment .....	13
<b>Best Practice Recommendations</b> .....	15
Train a Gender Safety Leader at Every School .....	15
Create an Administrative Transition Plan .....	15
Conduct a Survey of the School Environment .....	16
Offer Opportunities for Dialogue, Education, and Training .....	16
Provide Support for Students .....	16
<b>Books and Online Resources</b> .....	17
<b>Definitions</b> .....	18
<b>Citations, Photo Credits</b> .....	19
<b>Sample Gender Survey for Faculty/Administration</b> .....	20

## PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE



This guide is designed to assist school personnel in successfully adapting to challenges posed by gender transitions in schools. New definitions, behaviors, and policies may be necessary to acclimatize the environment and educate people at every level of the school system, including administration, faculty, students, parents, and support staff. Most of all, respectful dialogue that welcomes all viewpoints will be a necessary component for making schools safe, inclusive, and supportive for every student and family.

As people begin to openly express gender in unfamiliar ways, our traditional thinking, beliefs, and even our communications may be challenged. YES Institute created the following guidelines and best practice recommendations (see page 15) based on current research and 13 years of experience providing education on gender and orientation in South Florida schools.

## INTRODUCTION

On the first day of a new school year, you see boys and girls sitting at their desks. You recognize males by their masculine characteristics (generally short hair, pants, deep voices, etc.), and females by their feminine characteristics (generally longer hair, skirts, blouses, higher pitched voices, etc.). This is the binary view of gender.

In fact, the characteristics we see on the outside tell us nothing about how the students identify, or how they experience gender. You have probably had male students with long hair and earrings, and female students in jeans, short hair, and boots. You have probably seen male students pursuing interests considered more “feminine,” such as music or art. Similarly, you have probably seen female students interested in science and sports, thought to be more “masculine” activities.

Unfortunately, students with appearances and interests not typically expected in our culture are often judged, taunted, and harassed as “gay.” “Gay,” “lesbian,” and other labels denoting orientation are weapons against students who do not follow the strict gender code: males must be masculine, females must be feminine. Research shows:

- **50% of all elementary & middle school bullying incidents involve the use of gender or orientation slurs** (Espelage, 2009).

Ironically, most of the students being called these words do *not* identify as gay or lesbian. The *83,000 Youth Survey* (Reis & Saewyc, 1999), conducted across 7 states, revealed:

- **80% of students harassed as gay identify as *heterosexual*.**

This statistic points to gender stereotypes as a source of harassment in schools. In our culture, we enforce very rigid gender norms that we expect to be fulfilled.

## Gender Awareness Changing

Did you know that your school has students who do not identify with the biological sex assigned them at birth (female/male)? For years, these students have often been grouped and mistakenly labeled as "gay." Our expectations around gender lead us down a false path of binary, either/or thinking (see page 6).

Recent media programs show a changing awareness and interest in gender:

- **CNN** featured a boy bullied to death by gender slurs (see video link, page 17).
- **ABC's 20/20** featured 3 children and families dealing with gender transitions (see video link, page 17).
- **Newsweek** ran a cover story titled "Rethinking Gender" (Rosenberg, 2007).
- **Oprah Winfrey** aired 3 shows on gender and biology (Oprah, 2007).

In all of these reports, journalists documented numerous cases of students who are struggling to live in a way that is consistent with their authentic experience of gender. From children as young as 2 years old, through adults aged 50 and older, people report feeling they were "born in the wrong body." Because of society's gender expectations, these people experience tremendous conflict within their own families, as well as with the outside world. The word "transgender" is often associated with individuals whose expressions fall outside accepted notions of masculinity and femininity. "Transgender" is an umbrella term that actually encompasses many different experiences and expressions of gender that fall along a continuum.

*Underlined words are listed in the definitions section, page 18.*

## A Matter of Life and Death

Despite the flurry of media attention, the day-to-day reality of those struggling with gender is often very difficult, and can even be life-threatening. Statistics on youth who identify as transgender reflect a critical need for proactive responses:

- **31%** attempt suicide (Herbst, et al., 2008).
- **60%** are attacked in violent assaults (Moran & Sharpe, 2004).
- **Most parents** are paralyzed by shame, uninformed on the topic, and unable to advocate for their own children.
- **Parents who attempt to negotiate accommodations** for their children are often met with misunderstanding and resistance in institutional settings (Cooper, 1999).

If you haven't already, we predict that you will soon know a student who wishes to proceed with a gender transition. A transitioning student is in a very vulnerable place, and may feel their very life is at stake. As our society changes, so must we to keep pace with the students and families we serve, and the world in which we live.

School personnel are responsible for ensuring that all students, families, and staff are safe and supported. Your leadership will be a critical factor in successfully including transitioning students within every aspect of the school community.

### What is a Gender Transition?

The process of an individual publicly changing their gender presentation is known as “transitioning.” For example, a student you know as “male” may now wish to be recognized as “female.” Conversely, someone you know as “female” may now wish to be recognized as “male.” Gender transitions might also show up as a mix of gender expressions that are not traditionally “male” or “female,” bypassing or mixing such strict categorizations. For instance, a child assigned as male at birth may—with absolute clarity and certainty—claim to be a girl, but still feel comfortable with the pronoun “he.” The language we have simply does not capture the vast range of people’s experiences.

### What Do I Need to Know?

Gender transitions are highly individual, and only the students themselves will know their goals for transition. Hopefully this can occur with the full support of each student’s family. Common changes include name, clothing, mannerisms, appearance, and behaviors. These guidelines provide tips on how you can contribute to an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone. Depending on your professional role with students, certain aspects in this guide may apply to you more than others.



## GENDER: THEN & NOW

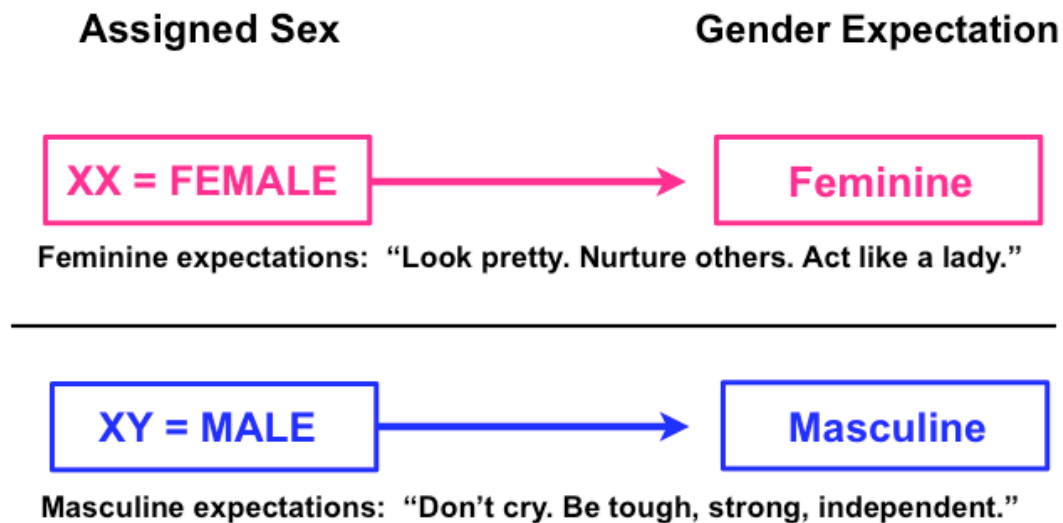
Gender is the social or cultural *meaning* we give to our biological sex assignment. In our culture, females are expected to be feminine (defined by appearance and relationships) and males are expected to be masculine (defined as NOT feminine).

Gender rules start at birth as simple but mandatory with pink or blue blankets and clothing. Gender is at the very core of our being—the starting point of who we are, who we think we are, and who we and others think we should be. Historically, gender, like sex assignment, has been conceptualized as binary: one’s sex is either female or male, and inevitably females must act feminine, and males must act masculine.

“Transgender” sounds so unfamiliar, people often have concerns that this is a new “fad” or invention created to attack the status quo. Sometimes when parents discover a transitioning child attends their child’s school, they irrationally fear the transitioning student will somehow—by their mere presence—encourage other students to also “become transgender.” These are myths, yet they are real fears parents may have and express.

Although it may seem as if people in gender transition are suddenly appearing everywhere, every era throughout world history is rich with examples of individuals who defied the gender expectations of their culture. Today, however, increased awareness and visibility of gender has made education and inclusion an immediate need.

## Binary Model



Current biological research is broadening our binary perception, and challenging our thinking in areas that once seemed familiar and sure. The only two possibilities we could envision from our binary view were XX = female and XY = male. We now know from genetic, chromosomal, and hormonal testing that nearly 2 in 100 individuals do not fit the traditional definitions of biological males or females.

One in 500 people has karyotypes other than these, which can include XXY (Klinefelter’s), XYY (Trisomy), XXX (Triso-X), and XY/XO (Mosaicism) sex chromosomes (ISNA, 2007). This research is erasing our previously simple understanding of human bodies.

## A New Framework for Understanding

As early as 2 or 3 years of age, children may begin identifying in a direct and obstinate way as contrary to the sex assigned them at birth. Some people make such declarations in middle school, high school, college, or even later in life. Children whose identities do not match their assigned sex often endure a tortured process of bargaining against pervasive gender prohibitions and huge social stigmas. These children are sometimes clinically diagnosed as having a conflict of gender identity\*, though they are fully aware and quite certain of who they are.

*\* GID - "Gender Identity Disorder" is a diagnostic category in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA, Revision IV-TR, 2000). In its current form, the diagnosis is controversial among advocates and mental health professionals. It is likely that this definition will be reformed as new research on gender becomes available.*

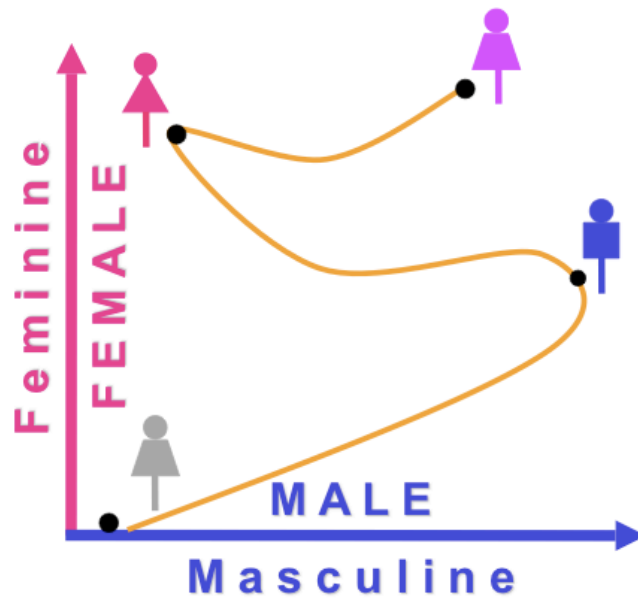
What we don't understand, we often fear, and "transgender" is a new topic for most people. In schools, as in society at large, anyone who does not "fit" into the binary model of sex and gender is subject to harassment, ridicule, and isolation. Biological research is providing new information that is paving the way for new frameworks of understanding.



One framework that more accurately captures the realities of human biology, as well as lived experience, is what scientists call an orthogonal model (see diagram on page 8). In this model, masculinity and femininity (just like male and female) are not absolute or mutually exclusive. Rather, these characteristics vary independently of each other. The same person can be both highly masculine and highly feminine, highly feminine but not at all masculine (or vice versa), or might be low on both scales (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

Similarly, a person can have biological features considered both female and male, and all can be envisioned as existing together.

## Orthogonal Model



The *orthogonal* model more closely resembles our reality of gender. For example, when we first wake and begin our day (bottom left corner), we may not express many feminine or masculine traits. Going to work, we may have to fix a flat tire (considered masculine). At work, we may encounter a student in tears, and switch to be more nurturing (considered feminine). Our gender expression changes throughout each day, month, and lifetime.

## GENDER TRANSITIONING

Generally, the younger a student is, the faster the gender transition can “happen.” This is due in part to children’s physical bodies being less biologically differentiated before puberty. A parent may simply send a child to school one day with a different haircut and clothing that reflect how the child wishes to be recognized.

For older students, the transition may be more of a process—a gradual shift of clothing and body image. Puberty is often a difficult period, and a child may feel as if their body is “betraying” them. A “female” child who identifies as male or masculine may be horrified at the prospect of breast development or the onset of menstruation. Similarly, a “male” child who identifies as female may become increasingly anxious for some signifier of femininity, such as the start of their period, or the development of breasts. Sometimes, the student may choose to transition over a summer break, or wait until transferring schools or advancing to a different grade level to make the transformation. In other scenarios, the student may gradually transition throughout the school year.





Transitioning is not just about the student, but involves the parents, other students, immediate and extended family, and other community members. Everyone will need to make adjustments, particularly in attitudes and expectations, when a student who was previously known as one sex is now presenting as another.

### **Confidentiality Should Always Be Respected**

Disclosing any information about a student's gender status or transitioning process should only be done in conjunction with the student who is transitioning. Keep in mind the high risk of suicide and depression when students undergo this process. Unintentional or malicious disclosure could have life-threatening consequences.

People's perceptions of someone in the process of a gender transition will be shaped largely by the information they receive. Presenting the information in a way that represents the absolute support of the school for a transitioning student is one of the surest ways to contribute to good outcomes.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS**

### **Restrooms, Locker Rooms, and Swimming Pools**

In schools where segregated bathrooms are the norm, a frequent question arises: "Which restroom and/or locker room will the transitioning student use?" Most students will prefer to use the facility that corresponds with their gender presentation. Safety and social concerns, however, may necessitate other accommodations.



Assigning a "separate" or "special" bathroom can make the student feel singled out, and the outcome is segregating and isolating. A better practice that has been successfully implemented is to designate one or several **restrooms without a gender specification** that can be used by anyone.

This way, the transitioning student can use this facility and feel safe, as may other students who for various reasons want to access a restroom without gender specification.



In newer shopping malls and movie theaters, it is becoming commonplace to see **family restrooms** and **gender non-specific restrooms**. New schools are the perfect location to include plans for these facilities in future buildings. Older school buildings typically have a single bathroom by the main office, nurse's station, or faculty break room that can be designated as gender non-

specific. Some schools have money allocated for constructing new bathrooms; schools without such funds have typically chosen the designation method, which essentially costs nothing.

The same practice can work for changing rooms as well. Anything from inexpensive privacy curtains to constructed stalls can cordon off areas in locker rooms. Again, this benefits all students who request privacy for modesty or other reasons.

Exceptions may arise in many areas such as swimming class, where expected swimming attire may not be comfortable for certain students. In these cases, extenuating circumstances should be considered for alternative arrangements or excusal.

### Addressing Inappropriate Comments Toward Students

Gender is so fundamental to how we understand ourselves and our world, even the most well-meaning adult may have reactions to information that challenges their accepted understanding of gender.

Students as well as faculty may respond to difference in inappropriate ways, such as derision or taunting. Stop hurtful comments *on the spot* as they happen in hallways, buses, classrooms, and cafeterias; then open a dialogue by asking:



***"What did you say?" "What caused you to say it?"  
"What does it mean to you?"***

Use every difficulty or disruption as an opportunity to begin a dialogue toward education. People at every level of the school system will need to be educated about new concepts and appropriate ways to respond to transitioning students.

Faculty and students may initially not understand the impact of using inappropriate pronouns or making gender-specific comments. This is why education is so important for the whole school environment. People are more likely to be motivated to alter their behavior when they understand what is at stake. YES Institute is available for educational workshops on gender for faculty and students. If acute situations arise where someone is stubbornly resistant and continues to make inappropriate comments, it may be up to a Gender Safety Leader (GSL; see page 15) to intervene. A GSL can recommend or mandate educational training through appropriate channels in the school in order to maintain a safe environment.

### Pronoun Usage



Everyone student should be respectfully addressed with the name and pronoun they prefer. If you are uncertain what pronoun to use when addressing someone, politely inquire as to their preference: "Do you prefer to be referred to as 'he' or 'she'?" If you do not have an opportunity for a personal interaction, address the student with the pronoun most closely associated with their gender presentation. Once you have established which pronoun best fits their identity, honor their request by addressing them accordingly. Intentionally ignoring their request would be insulting and could even be detrimental to their well-being.

Keep in mind that transitioning youth are at increased risk of suicide, isolation, and depression. Though it may be difficult to change to the requested pronoun, it is a particularly empowering and meaningful gesture to someone transitioning. Like any new or unfamiliar behavior, mistakes in language may occur, which can be easily overcome by recognizing the slip, and offering a quick apology.

### **Appropriate Attire**



There are expected standards of dress and appearance for everyone in the school community. The standard for transitioning students should correspond with the norm for other students sharing a similar gender presentation.

Legitimate concerns about uniforms or dress code should be thoughtfully considered. Often transitioning children and their parents are earnestly trying to comply with school dress codes; however, most dress codes were conceived in a strict binary model, and do not accommodate the realities of a transitioning student.

To help resolve any uncertainty, the student, parent, and Gender Safety Leader (GSL; see page 15) may submit a written request to school officials for modification of dress code standards. This request should typically be submitted as soon as a new school year begins, or as soon as the student begins to transition. Other concerns or questions about dress should be addressed directly to the GSL.

### **Policy Extensions and Disciplinary Actions**

The process of a gender transition is unique for each person, and does not necessarily conform to expected or established schedules. Policies may need to be adjusted to accommodate people at different stages in their gender process. For example, school policy may require students and their families seeking exemption from a uniform code to submit such requests at the beginning of each school year. However, a transitioning student may only identify or feel the need for exemption after the official deadline has passed. Extenuating circumstances should be taken into account, and every supportive effort made before final and decisive actions are taken.

### **Gender-segregated Classes, Sports Teams, and Extracurricular Activities**

Activities or clubs should not exclude transitioning students due to knowledge of their assigned sex. To prevent membership of transitioning students in these clubs or sports teams would be discriminatory.

## Changing Student Records

The student's name on attendance lists, grading print-outs, and standardized tests should be changed to the new name. It may also be important to change the student's gender signifier in school records. Schools usually require a court order to make these changes.

There are two actions involved in changing a student's documentation:

- 1) a legal name change
- 2) a gender assignment change

The name change is easier to obtain than the gender assignment change. For the gender assignment change, two letters with a medical diagnosis are typically required, which must be obtained from psychologists. A judge or attorney can tell you what is needed for both actions.

While the student's new name should appear on attendance forms, tests, and grade books, administrators can always include the student's birth name in the notes section of computer records. Technology support staff may need to become involved to ensure that appropriate adjustments are made in record keeping systems.

Some students or families may not seek a legal name change, but simply request that a nickname be used to accommodate a student's preference (e.g. Riki instead of Richard, or Ren instead of Karen).

## Censoring Relationships or Alliances



An area that often presents a challenge for school faculty is the relationships transitioning students form with other classmates. Some faculty feel compelled to expose confidential information if a student's relationships do not meet their expectations of appropriate gender pairings. This response is motivated by erroneously deducing that the student is somehow misrepresenting who they are.

Faculty may wish to disclose private information not only to students, but also to parents of the relating students. **Intervening in this way is unethical, inappropriate, and absolutely not the responsibility of school personnel.**

## WHAT CONSTITUTES HARASSMENT?

According to the **2007/2008 MDCPS Code of Conduct for Secondary Students**  
<http://ehandbooks.dadeschools.net/policies/90/index.htm>:

**(Pg 54) Harassment:** Conduct directed at a person that causes him/her to feel intimidated or verbally, mentally, or emotionally abused, or that causes him/her substantial emotional distress.

*“What some people think is ‘just joking around’ might constitute **harassment** if the person at whom it is directed is distressed by it.”* Repeated harassment is **bullying**.

**(Pg 50) Bullying:** Repeatedly using hostile, intimidating, domineering, or threatening behavior with the intent or purpose of physically or mentally hurting another individual. Bullying occurs within an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power (physical or psychological). Unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing acts, by an adult or student that are severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.

**Aside from obvious verbal or physical harassment, transitioning students may also experience other dehumanizing acts, including:**

- Intentional use of wrong pronouns.
- Monitoring of dress based on sex stereotyping.
- Breaking confidentiality.
- Publicly using a student’s experience of gender transitioning as an example.
- Restricting bathroom or locker room usage.
- Preventing pursuit of membership in clubs and sports teams.
- Preventing participation in extracurricular activities.
- Censoring relationships or alliances.
- Any response that belittles the student or the process of transitioning, or limits a student’s self-expression.

### What to Do about Perceived Harassment

If harassment occurs, the incident(s) should be reported and documented in writing. The best practice is to write a letter that includes the names of the parties involved, what happened, the date, time, and location of the incident(s). Anyone who observed what happened should be asked to sign the document as verification of the incident(s).

The letter should be sent to the principal of the involved school(s). A copy of the letter should also be sent to Tony Valido at the Division of Student Services:

**Tony Valido, Division of Student Services**  
 1500 Biscayne Blvd, Room 341, Miami, FL 33132  
<http://studentservices.dadeschools.net>  
 Ph: **305-995-7560**



Additionally, it is recommended that a copy of the letter be sent to YES Institute. An outside community agency with experience in these matters may assist in avoiding or alleviating problems.



**Rachel Sottile, MS, Executive Director**  
 5275 Sunset Drive, Miami, FL 33143  
[rachel@yesinstitute.org](mailto:rachel@yesinstitute.org)  
 Ph: 305-663-7195

According to MDCPS School Board rules, the principal has 10 days to respond to the harassment incident(s), or assign someone to investigate the situation. If the principal does not respond in a manner satisfactory to the student, the letter can be forwarded to the next higher level in the district: either the ACCESS Center Student Advocacy Director, or the Assistant Superintendent.

“**MDCPS School Board Rules** 6Gx13-4A-1.01, 6Gx13-4A-1.32, and 6Gx13-5D-1.10 - Prohibit harassment and/or discrimination against a student or employee on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs, marital status, age, sexual orientation, social and family background, linguistic preference, pregnancy, or disability.”

### Civil Rights Violations

**(Pg. 54) Harassment (Civil Rights):** Harassment directed at someone because of his or her gender, race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, political beliefs, marital status, age, sexual orientation, social and family background, language, pregnancy, or disability.



For severe cases, the MDCPS Office of Civil Rights Compliance has their own formal complaint procedure, available on their website:  
[http://crc.dadeschools.net/file\\_complaint.asp](http://crc.dadeschools.net/file_complaint.asp)

“There are three (3) ways students, parents, employees, applicants, or former employees can file a complaint of discrimination/harassment with the Office of Civil Rights Compliance (CRC) based on the following protected categories: Gender, Race, Color, Ethnic or National Origin, Religion, Age, Disability, Pregnancy, Marital Status, Linguistic Preference, Sexual Orientation, Social and Family Background, Political Beliefs, Sexual Harassment, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and Retaliation.

An individual may elect to send in a written complaint or call in a discrimination/harassment complaint directly to CRC; (s)he may report the allegation to the worksite administrator; or (s)he may report the complaint to the Miami-Dade Schools Police (M-DSP).”

## BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Train a Gender Safety Leader (GSL) at every school.

Since transitioning students present unique challenges and opportunities for schools, it is suggested that a faculty member be designated and trained as a Gender Safety Leader (GSL). This person would become knowledgeable about transitioning students and help assure a smooth process for the student and school community. Once a student has communicated their intention to begin a gender transition, they should be referred to the GSL.

#### **Responsibilities of the GSL:**

- Familiarize the transitioning student(s) and/or family(s) with pertinent school policies and best practices.
- Assess the school environment, attempt to foresee potential areas of conflict, and design solutions for each one in partnership with school administration.
- Work with the school (and family of the student, if appropriate) to develop an administrative plan (see below).
- Act as the liaison with the areas of school affected by the transition, such as administration, faculty, the Division of Student Services, and outside consulting agencies such as YES Institute.
- Meet with the principal, vice principals, and parents (if applicable) to discuss the transition plan, and create a partnership for a successful school year.
- Introduce the impending transition to administration and faculty only on an as-needed basis, with appropriate follow-up education and support.
- Open dialogue in the school about gender and gender transitions when a need is identified. Familiarize the faculty with available guidelines, and create opportunities for education on these topics wherever there is a need.
- Provide a checkpoint for effective action and intervention if any breakdowns or upsets occur.

Ultimately, the GSL is the “go to” person if there are questions, concerns, or complaints during the school year related to the transitioning student. The GSL is the access point for all the resources available through MDCPS and YES Institute.

### 2. Create an administrative transition plan.

Schools should have a readiness plan for how to address all the key areas in this guide, school-specific factors not mentioned here, and unforeseen circumstances. Questions to begin asking include:

- A. Who will be the GSL in our school? Who will be the backup person in case of absence?
- B. Does the faculty have enough knowledge about transitioning students and the risks they face? Is an educational in-service needed? (YES Institute provides this.)
- C. Does the faculty understand and respect the concerns transitioning students have related to disclosure, safety, and harassment?
- D. Do we have a plan for instances where parents are not supportive of students and are unwittingly contributing to adverse outcomes?
- E. Do we have safe restrooms and other facilities for transitioning students?
- F. Can our record systems and administrator(s) handle name/record changes?
- G. If the child chooses to disclose their status to others in the school, do we have a plan for education school-wide?
- H. If the child wishes to remain confidential about their status, can faculty be accountable for honoring and keeping this confidentiality agreement?
- I. Are administrators informed on this topic? Will they make accommodations when needed and approve necessary changes to maintain student well-being?
- J. Do administrators understand that certain exceptions may be inevitable for transitioning students regarding dress code, sports clubs, or other situations that may arise?

### **3. Conduct a survey of the school environment.**

We strongly recommend beginning an annual survey of your school today to measure attitudes and behaviors related to this topic. This will provide a baseline assessment of the current environment, and a starting point for learning how to best make the school safe for all students. YES Institute has developed a sample survey to use for this purpose (see page 20).

### **4. Offer opportunities for dialogue, education, and training.**

Make gender education available to students and faculty who want to learn and understand the changing cultural environment of schools. Provide a forum for each member of the school community to ask questions, voice concerns, and learn about gender transitions. Open dialogue is fundamental for creating a safe and supportive school environment.

Educational presentations and training for faculty, parents, PTA members, counselors, coaches, students, bus drivers, security, and all other support staff are highly recommended. YES Institute can design and facilitate educational trainings appropriate for your school. Call 305-663-7195 for more information.

### **5. Provide support for students.**

Creating opportunities for students to share their experiences around gender in a safe space is a way to maintain a supportive school environment. Some possibilities include a "Gender Support Team" or "Gender Alliance Club." Such a group, comprised of supportive and understanding peers, can provide much needed affirmation to transitioning students. This could be a critical support network in middle schools and high schools, where often students' self esteem is linked to their social status in a group.



## BOOKS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

### Books for Parents

Grant, Stephanie. *The Agony of Nurturing the Spirit - A Mother's Recount of Raising a Transgendered Child*. Available to order from:  
<http://www.pflagphila.org/orderform3.html>

### Books for Counselors and Therapists

Lev, Arlene I. (2004). *Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working with Gender-Variant People and Their Families*. Haworth Clinical Practice Press. Taylor & Francis: Binghamton, NY. ISBN 0-7890-2117-X (or ISBN-13: 9780789021175).

Mallon, Gerald (1999). *Social Services with Transgender Youth*. Harrington Park Press, New York. ISBN 1-56023-135-1.

### E-groups for Youth and Families

Transfamily website e-list. Free to join.  
<http://www.transfamily.org/emailist.htm>

### Online Videos

20/20 with Barbara Walters (2007). "My Secret Self" available on YouTube.  
*There are 5 parts to this video. Be sure to look for the other 4.*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Utpam0IGYac>

CNN News (2009). "Bullied to Death" available on CNN Video.  
<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/us/2009/04/18/kaye.bullying.suicide.cnn?iref=videosearch>

### Movies

*Ma Vie En Rose* [My Life in Pink]. (1997). French with English or Spanish subtitles.  
Rated: R for brief strong language. Produced by: Canal+.

### Contribute Your Suggestions

*If you have a specific suggestion for this guide—directed toward assuring that all students have equal access to the best education—please send your thoughts to [luke@yesinstitute.org](mailto:luke@yesinstitute.org) or call YES Institute at 305-663-7195.*

## DEFINITIONS

**Binary:** two-fold, consisting of only two parts.

**Continuum:** A continuous extent, succession, or whole, no part of which can be distinguished from neighboring parts, except by arbitrary division.

**Gender:** the meaning attached to biological attributes, conceived in a binary illusion.

**Gender expression/presentation:** refers to external characteristics and behaviors socially defined as masculine, feminine, or androgynous (i.e. dress, mannerisms, speech).

**Gender Safety Leader (GSL):** person who is trained to support transitioning students, and address concerns about gender transitions within the school environment.

**Gender transition:** the process and procedures one undertakes to change their gender presentation in the world to present themselves authentically.

**Feminine / femininity:** characteristics and qualities representing expected cultural attitudes and behaviors traditionally associated with people assigned as female. In our current Western culture, the two main aspects by which femininity is measured are *appearance* and *relationships*.

**Masculine / masculinity:** characteristics and qualities representing expected cultural attitudes and behaviors traditionally associated with people assigned as male. In our current Western culture, masculinity is measured by the degree to which people distance themselves from anything considered feminine or womanly.

**Orientation:** the direction of one's sexual interest toward other people.

**Orthogonal model:** a representation allowing one to envision characteristics along a full continuum of human expression, rather than a binary, either/or concept.

**Sex assignment:** binary assignment given to newborns based on physical attributes.

**Female:** sex assignment given to newborns with a vulva.

**Male:** sex assignment given to newborns with a penis.

**Transgender:** Umbrella term encompassing any self-expression or identity that does not conform to a male/female binary illusion.

**Transitioning:** the process of undertaking a gender transition.

**Vulnerable:** capable of being physically or emotionally wounded; open to attack or damage.

## CITATIONS

- Cooper, Ken (1999). Practice with Transgender Youth and Their Families. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, Vol 10*, No 3/4, pp. 111-129.
- Espelage, D. (2009) [CDC grant—in progress]. Grant number: CE001268. Project Title: Middle school bullying and sexual violence: Measurement issues & etiological models. Project Period: 09/01/2007 - 08/31/2010. Last accessed June 23, 2009 at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/profiles/violence/abstracts.htm>
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne (2000). *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. Basic Books: New York.
- Herbst, J. H., Jacobs, E. D., Finlayson, T. J., McKleroy, V. S., Neumann, M. S., & Crepaz, N. (2008). Estimating HIV prevalence and risk behaviors of transgender persons in the United States: A systematic review. *AIDS and Behavior, 12*(1), 1-17.
- ISNA - Intersex Society of North America (2007). How Common Is Intersex? <http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>
- Mallon, Gerald (1999). *Social Services with Transgender Youth*. Harrington Park Press, New York. ISBN 1-56023-135-1.
- Mallon, Gerald & DeCrescenzo, Teresa (2006). *Child Welfare*. Washington: Mar/Apr 2006. Vol. 85, Iss. 2; pp. 215-242.
- Moran, L. and Sharpe, A. (2004). Violence, Identity and Policing: The Case of Violence Against Transgender People. *Criminal Justice*. Sage Publications. Vol. 4, No. 4. pp. 395-417.
- Oprah Winfrey (2007, September 28). "Born in the Wrong Body." *Oprah*, last accessed June 23, 2009 at: [http://www.oprah.com/dated/oprahshow/oprahshow\\_20070928](http://www.oprah.com/dated/oprahshow/oprahshow_20070928)
- Reis, Beth & Saewyc, Elizabeth (1999). 83,000 Youth Survey. Selected Findings of Eight Population-Based Studies. Safe Schools Coalition of Washington. <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf>
- Rosenburg, Debra (2007, May 21). "(Rethinking) Gender." *Newsweek*, last accessed June 23, 2009 at: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/34772>

## PHOTO CREDITS

**chessclub.jpg** This image was originally posted to Flickr by AskJoanne at <http://flickr.com/photos/69115548@N00/153190220>. It was reviewed on 10:56, 25 August 2007 (UTC), by FlickrreviewR, and confirmed to be licensed under the terms of the cc-by-sa-2.0.

**School bus.jpg** This image was originally posted to [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:School\\_bus.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:School_bus.jpg) by PRA at 18:01, 2 February 2006 (UTC), and confirmed to be licensed under the terms of the cc-by-sa-2.5.

**Children marbles.jpg** This image by Tup Wanders was originally posted to Flickr at <http://flickr.com/photos/69115548@N00/153190220>. It was reviewed on November 30th, 2006, by the administrator or trusted user Dodo, and confirmed to be licensed under the terms of the cc-by-sa-2.0.

**Testtakingstudent.jpg** This image was posted to <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Testtakingstudent.jpg> by Prevail at 17:00, 9 May 2006, and confirmed to be licensed under the terms of the cc-by-sa-2.5.

**Duck Duck Goose.jpg** This image was posted to [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Duck\\_Duck\\_Goose.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Duck_Duck_Goose.jpg) by Ragesoss at 01:07, 15 May 2007, and confirmed to be licensed under the terms of the cc-by-sa-2.5.

## - S A M P L E - Gender Survey for Teachers & Administrators

- 1) I've seen the following among students based on gender stereotypes or "anti-gay" attitudes:
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>A) Verbal slurs ("That's so gay! Sissy, Dyke, Faggot")</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Never    <input type="radio"/> Few times a year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Once or twice a month</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Weekly    <input type="radio"/> Daily</p> | <p>B) Physical harassment or bullying</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Never    <input type="radio"/> Few times a year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Once or twice a month</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Weekly    <input type="radio"/> Daily</p> |
|--|--|
- 2) A lot of students are expressing gender in ways that are unfamiliar to me:
- Strongly disagree     Disagree     Unsure     Agree     Strongly agree
- 3) My comfort level with students perceived as transgender is: [ Don't know what transgender is.]
- |  |  |                              |  |  |
|--|--|------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Very uncomfortable | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat uncomfortable | <input type="radio"/> Unsure | <input type="radio"/> Fairly comfortable | <input type="radio"/> Very comfortable |
|--|--|------------------------------|--|--|
- 4) When possible, I've spoken up when a student is bullied with gender-based or "anti-gay" slurs.
- Never     Very rarely     Sometimes     Often     Always
- 5) I think people considered gay or transgender are sick or disordered:
- Strongly disagree     Disagree     Unsure     Agree     Strongly agree
- 6) I would know which restroom is safe and appropriate for a student going through a gender transition.
- Strongly disagree     Disagree     Unsure     Agree     Strongly agree
- 7) I feel prepared to respond appropriately when students harass one another with gender-based or "anti-gay" slurs.  Strongly disagree     Disagree     Unsure     Agree     Strongly agree
- 8) I use "anti-gay" words or jokes to tease and joke around with students.
- Never     Few times a year     Once or twice a month     Weekly     Daily
- 9) I would be comfortable addressing and discussing students' questions or concerns when one of their peers undergoes a gender transition at our school.
- Strongly disagree     Disagree     Unsure     Agree     Strongly agree
- 10) If a student requested to be called another pronoun in my class, I would feel comfortable doing this consistently.
- Strongly disagree     Disagree     Unsure     Agree     Strongly agree
- 11) I would be comfortable addressing and discussing parents' questions or concerns about a student undergoing a gender transition at our school.
- Strongly disagree     Disagree     Unsure     Agree     Strongly agree

My home zip code: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ My preferred pronoun:  He  She  Neither  
 My department or profession at the school: \_\_\_\_\_