

WORKING WITH AN ATHLETE WHO IDENTIFIES AS TRANSGENDER

TRANSGENDER ETIQUETTE

If a member of your swim club discloses their transgender identity, remember to listen, be supportive, remain non-judgmental, educate yourself, and ask about pronoun and name preferences.

Using the correct gender pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/their/theirs, among others) is a very important way that coaches can make transgender people feel accepted on the team. If at any time you are not sure what pronoun to use, refer to the person by their name and ask the person what pronouns they use. **A transgender person might tell you that they prefer gender neutral pronouns: they/them, sie/ hir (pronounced see/hear) or zie/zim.**

Here are a few basic rules of transgender etiquette:

- Affirm the person's identity by using the pronouns they ask you to use; it is helpful if you identify your own pronouns first and then ask what pronouns they use.
- If you are unsure of one's gender identity, try to avoid pronouns, or use "their."
- It is okay to make a mistake, just be willing to correct yourself, apologize, and move on.
- Create an open discussion with your athlete, and ask when you are unsure.
- Be careful not to "out" anyone publicly. If someone comes out to you, it does not mean that they want everyone to know.
- If you have a general question about transgender people, try a credible source like the Human Rights Campaign.
- Respect the person's privacy.
- Remember that you do not have the right to know any medical or anatomical info about anyone else's body—so don't ask just because you are curious.
- Refrain from asking for their "birth name."
- Don't tell them it's hard or uncomfortable for you.
- Keep in mind that not all transgender people have similar experiences.

- Don't compare a transgender person's experience to a non-transgender person's experience.
- Once a transgender athlete feels safe and validated,

you will want to establish an open and honest working relationship as you move forward. The Safe Sport section of this resource guide goes into greater detail about ways to accommodate a transgender athlete, including talking with your athlete about competing at meets, and changing their member registration to the correct gender.

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FACILITIES

Under Safe Sport's recommended practices for the inclusion of minor transgender athletes, swimmers should be permitted to use the locker room, changing facility and restroom consistent with their gender identity. Transgender athletes should never be forced to use a separate changing area. However, when requested by a transgender athlete or their family, transgender athletes should be provided access to a gender-neutral space.

Gender-neutral facilities create safe spaces for transgender athletes who may fear harassment from their peers. Separate facilities may be especially helpful for transgender athletes who undergo physical changes as they transition from one gender to another.

Most new construction requires a third bathroom/locker room to be built for gender neutral use, but most swim teams still practice in old buildings that may not have these facilities available. Here are a few tips to accommodate in an aging facility:

1. Convert a family changing area or other existing space to a gender neutral locker room.
2. **Change signage when appropriate to use gender-neutral language like "Gender Inclusive" or "All-Gender." Make sure images on signs are also gender neutral.**
3. Accommodations need to be convenient, and properly located (i.e. close to the pool, large enough for changing).
4. Work with your building manager to discuss options and optimize the outcome.
5. Work with your local LGBTQ alliance organization to get advice.
6. Contact USA Swimming Facilities Department for help (719) 866-4578 or www.usaswimming.org/facilities

COMPETITION

RULES

Rules and policies regarding transgender athlete participation in competitions can be found on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FINA websites. Always refer to their websites for the most up-to-date policies.

- <http://www.olympic.org/ioc> • <http://www.fina.org/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Trans*Athlete: A resource for students, athletes, coaches and administrators to find information about transgender inclusion in athletes at various levels of play. www.transathlete.com

- NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student:

https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Transgender_Handbook_2011_Final.pdf

- Pride in Sport: Guidance for Swimming Governing Bodies on LGBT Inclusion:

http://www.prideinsport.info/wp-content/uploads/prideinsport-swimming_guidance.pdf

4. TRANSGENDER INCLUSION: BEST PRACTICES FOR A MINOR

A minor transgender athlete member should be allowed to participate in accordance with their gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the athlete's birth certificate or other records and regardless of whether the athlete has undergone any medical treatment.

A list of recommended practices for the inclusion of transgender athletes can be found on USA Swimming Safe Sport's website.

- [www.usaswimming.org/toolkitModel Policies and GuidelinesInclusion of Transgender Athletes Best Practices](http://www.usaswimming.org/toolkitModelPoliciesandGuidelinesInclusionofTransgenderAthletesBestPractices)