



## Gender Support Administrative Procedure

This policy sets forth Lake Forest Academy's guidelines for addressing the needs and concerns of transgender and gender non-conforming students, and is designed to promote a safe, affirming, and healthy school environment where every student can learn.

### Definitions

- **Gender Identity** refers to an individual's intrinsic sense of self and their sense of being female, male, a combination of both, or neither regardless of their sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender Expression** is the way an individual expresses their gender identity (e.g., in the way they dress, the length and style of their hair, the way they act or speak, the volume of their voice, and in their choice of whether or not to wear make-up.) Understandings of gender expression are culturally specific and will change over time.
- **Sex Assigned at Birth** is often based solely on external genitalia but sex also includes internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics.
- **Transgender** refers to individuals whose gender identity is different from what was assumed based on their sex assigned at birth, and/or whose gender expression is different from the way males or females are stereotypically expected to look or behave. This is an umbrella term for a variety of gender identities and expressions that an individual may self-identify with.
- **Transition** is a way to describe the process(es) an individual may go through in order to change their gender expression and identity documents to match their internal gender identity. Transitions can be social, emotional, legal, and/or medical and are different for every individual. In children, adolescents, and adults, it is increasingly common for gender transition to be fluid.
- **Cisgender** is a term used to describe people whose gender identity corresponds with their assigned sex at birth. This is typically the sex reflected on one's original birth certificate.
- **Gender Non-Conforming** is a term that refers to individuals who do not follow other people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth. Some people also identify as Agender, Gender Variant, Gender Expansive, Non-Binary, or Gender Creative and may use pronouns outside of the binary "he" and "she" including "they/them" pronouns, or may prefer to use their name instead of gender pronouns. Intersex is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with sex characteristics that don't fit the typical definitions of male and female.
- **Sexual Orientation** is a person's emotional and sexual attraction to other people based on the gender of the other person. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity. Not all transgender young people identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer and not all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer youth display gender non-conforming characteristics.



## Gender Support Team & Support Planning

The LFA Gender Support Team is a group that receives information on a confidential, need-to-know basis, and is convened to determine the appropriate supports for transgender and gender non-conforming students. The Team is responsible for constructing a Gender Support Plan for the student. Any student, or parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student, can request to establish or meet with the student's Gender Support Team through the Dean of Students Office.

The composition of the Team may vary, depending on the specific circumstances involved, but typically would include the Dean of Students, the student, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), and at least one additional member of the LFA staff. This having been said, LFA expressly reserves the right to determine that a student's parent(s)/guardian(s) should not be invited to join the Team if it concludes that such decision is necessary or beneficial to the safety or educational advancement of the student.

In the event that the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) are not invited to join the Team, but disclosure to the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) is deemed necessary or proper, the Gender Support Plan will indicate a clear outline for such disclosure that prioritizes the emotional health and educational success of the student.

## Confidentiality

The student's Gender Support Plan shall be kept in the student's file and may be shared only with staff members who have a legitimate health, safety, or educational interest in the information. To promote the safety and well-being of LFA students, school personnel are discouraged from disclosing a student's transgender status to other students or to the parents of other students unless such disclosure has been expressly authorized in the student's Gender Support Plan.

## The Gender Support Plan

A student's Gender Support Plan is intended to address the expressed wishes of the student, as well as of the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) if they are members of the LFA Gender Support Team. Typically, a Plan would contemplate, among other things, access to restrooms and other gender-segregated facilities, efforts to affirm the students preferred name and gender identity, disclosure of the student's gender identity to teachers, confidentiality of gender transition in student records and information systems, and staff training.

## Gendered Facilities & LFA-Sponsored Programs

As noted above, the Gender Support Plan normally will include a plan for supporting the student's access to gender-segregated facilities and LFA-sponsored programs that is consistent with the student's gender identity. This may include, but is not limited to, access to multi-stalled gendered restrooms, locker rooms, fine and performing arts programs, and other programs. As an associate member of the Illinois High School Association (IHSA), LFA will endeavor to follow the IHSA Policy and School Recommendations for Transgender Participation available online at <http://ihsa.org/>

LFA endorses efforts to enable students to use gendered facilities and have access to school-sponsored programs that are consistent with their Gender Support Plans. LFA also supports steps taken to ensure that regardless of gender identity, any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy will have access to an alternative, gender neutral facility. Conversely, it is LFA's policy that no student should be required to use a gender neutral facility because they are transgender or gender non-conforming.



## **Names & Pronouns**

LFA supports efforts to address students by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity and in manner consistent with the student's wishes. If requested by the parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or student, the Gender Support Plan will include a method for the requested name to be included in LFA's electronic database in order to inform teachers (including substitute teachers) of the preferred name to use when addressing the student. When contacting the parents or guardian of a student who is transgender or gender non-conforming, school personnel will also endeavor to use the name and pronouns specified in the student's Gender Support Plan.

## **Dress Code**

LFA supports students who elect to wear gender-affirming clothing to school, including at school-sponsored functions such as dances and graduation, provided such attire otherwise complies with school dress codes. A student whose gender expression is different from expectations based on the student's sex assigned at birth will not be considered disruptive of the educational process or in interference with the maintenance of a positive teaching/learning climate, provided such expression is otherwise consistent with the school's student code of conduct.

## **Curriculum & Pedagogy**

All LFA teachers, administrators, staff, and support staff shall endeavor to use a gender-affirming approach when carrying out their responsibilities. A gender-affirming approach is a framework used to create an environment in which transgender and gender non-conforming youth are able to live as the gendered person they identify themselves to be, and achieve healthy development and social, emotional, and academic success. This approach normally includes affirming students' gender identities and being flexible during gender transition processes.

## **Discrimination & Harassment**

No student will be denied equal access to education on the basis of their gender identity. LFA does not tolerate transphobic, sexist, or homophobic slurs, derogatory comments, innuendoes, or any other related action. LFA will always take steps to investigate and address complaints regarding harassment or discrimination.

Should LFA determine, in its sole discretion, that a student has engaged in gender-based harassment or discrimination, the matter will be managed in a manner consistent with the discipline process outlined in the LFA Student Handbook.

Should LFA determine, in its sole discretion, that school staff has intentionally and persistently refused to treat a student in a manner consistent with a gender-affirming approach, an existing Gender Support Plan, or this policy, or otherwise engaged in gender-based harassment or discrimination, the matter will be managed in a manner consistent with the LFA Faculty and Staff Handbook.

## **Accessibility**

These guidelines will be made available on the LFA website and referenced in the 2018-19 Student and Faculty and Staff Handbooks. The School Counseling Office and the Office of Pluralism and Multicultural Affairs can provide information about support services for students considering or experiencing gender



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transition. LFA also works closely with organizations such as Angles, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, and Gender Spectrum. Administrative staff who receive phone calls or in-person questions about these guidelines should refer all questions to the Dean of Students or the Office for Pluralism and Multicultural Affairs.

## **Legal Authority**

These guidelines are supported by 20 U.S.C. §1681(a), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Illinois Human Rights Act 775 ILCS 5/5-101 et seq., the Illinois Prevent School Violence Act 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7, and the Youth Mental Health Protection Act Illinois Public Act 99-0411.