

(To be posted on website 02-06-17)

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

BSA Position Statement on Transgender Youth

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Recognizing the established and well-known benefits of a single-gender program, the Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs are only available to boys.

Until recently, the BSA, along with schools, youth sports, and many other youth-serving organizations, ultimately deferred to the information on an individual's birth certificate to determine gender, and thus eligibility for Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting. In recent years the concept of gender identity has become much more complex than the binary choices of male and female and simply referring to a birth certificate. Communities and state laws are interpreting gender identity differently, and these laws vary widely from state to state.

As such, the Boy Scouts of America will accept and register youth in the Cub and Boy Scout programs based on the gender identity indicated on the application. Given that the welfare and best interests of each child is the top priority in Scouting, our organization's local councils will help find units that can provide for the best interest of the child.

When considering Scouting for a transgender youth, the youth's parents must have an initial discussion with the council and unit to determine:

- Is the child living culturally as a boy?
- Is the child recognized by his family as a boy?
- Is the child recognized by his school and/or community as a boy?

Living culturally as a boy generally includes dressing as a boy, using a culturally accepted male name or nickname, parents/caregivers using male pronouns when referring to the child, and being considered "a boy" in his daily-life. It is important that the Scouting community respectfully use the name and preferred pronouns (most likely male) when referring to the child. If the child is not living culturally as a boy, then the youth will not be eligible to register in these programs.

While discussing preferences directly with a transgender youth and the family is the best approach, helpful information is available to help ensure that we treat all Scouts with dignity and respect.

- Using Respectful Language (link on BSA web-site after 2/6/17)
- How Can Camps Support Transgender Youth – www.acacamps.org

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

INFORMATION FOR UNIT LEADERS REGARDING TRANSGENDER YOUTH IN SCOUTING

- Next week the BSA will post on its public-facing website a public statement with links to additional resources and background materials.
- Effective January 30, 2017, the BSA will process applications and accept youth members based upon the gender identified on their application.
- Very few units are likely to receive applications from youth identifying themselves as transgender.
- If a unit receives an inquiry from or about a transgender boy or an application from a transgender boy, they should advise the individual that transgender boys are eligible for membership and that a meeting to discuss their participation will be scheduled with a council professional as soon as possible.
- Immediately thereafter the unit leader should advise the district executive or other designated council professional who will assist the unit in determining whether the unit is prepared to accept and accommodate the youth or if another unit may be more appropriate.
- After a preliminary review, the council professional, appropriate unit leader(s), youth and parents will meet and discuss matters related to privacy, participation and a plan to ensure that a safe and welcome environment is provided.
- If a unit is aware of a transgender boy already participating in a BSA program, they should engage the appropriate council professional to ensure that the same issues pertaining to new participants have been properly addressed.
- Every youth and their needs present different opportunities for unit leaders to help them in their development. Transgender youth are no different than any other youth in that regard.
- Local council professionals have been provided with ***Transgender Inclusion Guidelines*** on how to facilitate the necessary discussions and planning required to define expectations with all involved to assure that the youth's, parent's and unit's expectations are all defined to ensure the youth has a successful and positive Scouting experience.
- Unit leaders whose religious chartered organization's faith beliefs may prevent the unit from being able to accept the youth should immediately contact the council Scout Executive for assistance and potential referral to another unit.

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Using Respectful Language

Although there is experience in youth serving organizations with transgender boys in a program like Scouting, the Scout Oath and Law remind us to treat all people – especially children – with dignity and respect. The following definitions, based on resources from various experts, are not meant to label, but are intended as functional descriptors to help encourage respectful conversations among Scouting professionals, leaders and volunteers.

- **Sex** - The classification of a person as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on a birth certificate.) A person's sex, however, is a combination of bodily characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs.
- **Gender Identity** - A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices.
- **Sexual Orientation** - Describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same.
- **Transgender (adj.)** - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon appearance or medical procedures.
- **Transition** - Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition can include some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Avoid the phrase "sex change".

A Word about Names, Pronoun Usage and Descriptions

The most respectful and courteous approach is to ask a transgender person what their preferred name is and what pronouns they prefer to use. It is also helpful to remember:

- Always use a transgender person's chosen name.
- Use the pronoun that matches the person's gender.
- If it is not possible to ask a transgender person which pronoun they use, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person's appearance and gender expression or use the singular they.
- It is never appropriate to put quotation marks around a transgender person's chosen name or the pronoun that reflects that person's gender identity.