

The DEI Committee is proud to introduce our Gender Identity Policy. We believe this policy is integral to upholding Trekkers' core values and fulfilling our goal of empowering Maine youth.

We want all Maine youth to know that Trekkers is a safe space for them, regardless of background. Implementing a specific policy around gender expression and identity is a step in that direction. This policy makes clear to students, parents, teachers and staff that all transgender and gender nonconforming individuals will be accepted into the Trekkers community and treated with respect.

In recent years, more and more Trekkers participants have identified as non-binary, queer and an assortment of identities outside of the normative gender binary. Since 1994, Trekkers has strived to cultivate the inherent strengths of our youth; as our youth evolve, Trekkers must as well. In theory, this policy enforces our mission statement and supports our students. In reality, this type of policy is a form of harm reduction.

According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's National School Climate Survey,¹ an overwhelming majority (76%) of transgender students feel unsafe at school because of their gender, 65% have experienced verbal harassment, 25% have been physically harassed, and 12% have been physically assaulted due to their gender expression.

More than half (51%) of transgender students in the National School Climate Survey were prevented from using their chosen name and pronouns at school and 60% were required to use facilities corresponding to the gender on their government IDs.

In 2015, a survey of nearly 28,000 adults in the United States found that 77% of those who were out or perceived as transgender in elementary, middle, and high school faced mistreatment because of their gender identities, including 17% who left school because of the extent of their mistreatment.

These statistics are troubling, but not unchangeable. Trekkers' Gender Identity Policy will benefit not only students, but staff and volunteers on their journey to empower Trekkers participants. We believe this policy will help ensure more equitable opportunities at Trekkers and provide a framework through which to better achieve this goal.

Finally, by implementing an explicit gender identity policy, Trekkers signals both our commitment to inclusiveness and celebration of all students to the larger Maine community. This policy will help encourage students to participate fully in programming without fear of harassment or curbed resources, and illustrate to those same students, as well as their families and peers, that everyone is welcomed and valued at Trekkers.

Proposed Policy on Gender Identity April 2022

¹ GLSEN & National Center for Transgender Equality. "Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students." Revised September 2018.

Gender identity is a core aspect of personal identity, and Trekkers bases its policies on the knowledge that only an individual determines their gender identity. Trekkers staff will recognize each individual's gender identity, which may not be the identity that is known or supported by everyone in an individual's life.

Trekkers understands and respects that individuals may choose to use different names and pronouns with different groups of people. Trekkers will make every attempt to support these requests (for example, one set of pronouns within a cohort setting and a different set for communication with family). Trekkers recognizes that gender identity is not always static and how a person identifies and the pronouns that correspond to their identification may change over time.

Individuals will have access to facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Any individual who is uncomfortable using a shared gender-segregated facility, regardless of the reason, shall, upon request, be provided with a safe and non-stigmatizing alternative. To access alternative accommodations, an individual will need to make a request. Transgender or gender nonconforming individuals will not be required to use separate spaces against their wishes. No one will be required to use gender-segregated facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity.